

Filed for intro on 02/04/98

HOUSE RESOLUTION 141
By Bowers

A RESOLUTION to honor Buffalo Soldiers by declaring February 20, 1998, "Buffalo Soldier Day".

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this General Assembly should honor those persons who have fearlessly served this country by putting their life on the line; and

WHEREAS, one such group is the Buffalo Soldiers, who through their exceptional valor and skill have courageously served their country, and have displayed bravery that has only recently been recognized; and

WHEREAS, there is a legend that the first Buffalo Soldiers were named so by Native Americans because their hair and fierce fighting spirit reminded Native Americans of the great buffalo which they revered; and

WHEREAS, in 1867 Congress created four black regiments: the 9th U.S. Calvary, 10th U.S. Calvary, 24th U.S. Infantry and 25th U.S. Infantry, also known as the Buffalo Soldiers; these soldiers were sent West by Congress to protect settlements and railroad workers, to build roads and to set up telegraphs; they were responsible for discovering and mapping huge plots of unknown territory, particularly in the Southwest; and

WHEREAS, the Buffalo Soldiers of the Old West earned an exemplary 25 Medals of Honor; during both the Civil War and the Spanish-American War black veterans were awarded Medals of Honor proportionate to the number of blacks to whites in the armed services; but

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during World War I no Medals of Honor were awarded black soldiers who were highly decorated by the French for their heroic battlefield deeds; and

WHEREAS, World War I Cpl. Freddie Stowers was given the Medal of Honor posthumously seventy years after World War I; more than one million black soldiers were involved in World War II, of them fifty thousand saw combat, but again none received the Medal of Honor, until 1997, fifty-two years after World War II; and

WHEREAS, on January 13, 1997, during a White House Ceremony in the East Room, 52 years after their World War II service, seven black World War II veterans were presented the Medal of Honor; Vernon J. Baker was the only living black World War II veteran to receive the Medal of Honor; six other black World War II veterans - George Watson, Edward A. Carter, Willy F. James, Ruben Rivers, Charles L. Thomas, and John R. Fox were deceased at the time of the ceremony; and

WHEREAS, these World War I and II veterans and their earlier counterparts were heroes but their heroism has escaped public recognition; and

WHEREAS, the Buffalo Soldiers not only battled America's foreign enemies, but the racism of Jim Crow and the degradation of fighting as segregated troops on foreign soil, while defending not only their nation's cause, but their personal honor and integrity as men; and

WHEREAS, this body finds it appropriate that this assembly should recognize and honor those outstanding citizens and the contributions they made to our great country through their prodigious achievements; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE-HUNDREDTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, That the General Assembly hereby designates Friday, February 20, 1998, as "Buffalo Soldier Day" in Tennessee, urging all Tennesseans to use that occasion to honor and recognize these gallant men's heroism.

